

Virtual Walk in the Garden with Andrew F.
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Andrew joined the VanDusen team as subforeperson in late 2019. He has had 20 years of experience in the horticultural world, first working privately for landscapers during the summer to fund his studies. As he finished one stage of his education, he decided to switch gears so studied landscape design at Kwantlen College 2006-2008. In 2009 he joined Parks as an apprentice for four years, rotating through many parks. During his rotation at VanDusen, he worked in the Sino-Himalayan Garden with former gardener Gerry G. At the end of his apprenticeship, he also received his Red Seal accreditation. At the end of 2012, he was posted as a gardener at Sunset Nursery, then in 2016, he was appointed subforeperson at Queen Elizabeth Park where he focused on intensive displays of annuals. His style impressed the VanDusen director at the time, Yann Gagnon, who recruited him to do more of that kind of work in our Garden.

Andrew's VanDusen role as subforeperson includes organizing the work crews, especially for special projects and events, so he doesn't do as much hands-on gardening these days, even in his own areas which are at the north side of the Garden. They extend from Gate 7 down the Winter Walk over to the BC Habitat Garden, the north Great Lawn, Bed 71 across from the Heather Garden, and the beds on the north side of the Cherry Walk up to the Japanese Landscape Garden across from the cherry grove.

We started our walk just north of the Plaza where Andrew pointed out the newly planted *Magnolia macrophylla* near where another big *M. macrophylla* was removed last year because it was leaning too much. The new tree is about eight years old, and it may need another four years to bloom. Andrew noted that the function of the beds along Oak is to buffer the street noise, so he is bulking up plantings in this area. He has added some new bark paths so visitors can explore the back of these beds and is adding more interesting plants. He pointed out an older plant, *Rubus phoenicolasius*, wineberry, a bramble that produces dark red, almost translucent berries. Further along Bed 13, he pointed out the tall *Aralia elata*, which is one of his favourite plants. It has tall, straight stems which don't start branching until they are 3 metres high. It has four-season interest, and one autumn when the berries had formed at the top, a storm bent the plant over the walkway, and you could see them the fruit clusters up close. The lovely, tall *Pinus coulteri* at the north end of the Winter Walk was another victim of this winter's storms. It was never very healthy and didn't like our wet climate. However, he was able to save the cones and sent them to Sunset Nursery for propagation.

Walking past the Sequoiadendron Grove, Andrew said that the tree struck by lightning last year seems fine. The arborists need to clean up the broken branches near the top, then the 'caution' tape will be removed. The large weeping willow along the lake lost a huge branch this winter, but there is now more sun over the bench under it.

Andrew also planted lots of daffodils along the Winter Walk, especially the early-blooming *Narcissus* 'February Gold' and *N.* 'Rijnfeld's Early Sensation'. He mentioned that this year more daffodils were planted all over the Garden, especially in display areas, because tulips are increasingly impacted by Tulip Fire blight, which also stays in the soil and will infect future tulips. As we walked towards the Japanese Maple area, a large display of tulips in the two crescent-shaped beds will soon be removed and replaced by annuals to frame the wedding area. Under the Japanese maples, they planted lots of different *Narcissus* varieties this year, with labels, so the visitors could see how many cultivars there are. It has proved to be a popular spot this season.

This section of the Garden is challenging, especially since the soil is full of pathogens, which also impact the maples. There is a lot of morning glory, and it is difficult to manage the fire ants. The changes in the planting beds last year were made to focus more attention on the beautiful maples, and the additional plantings will slowly evolve towards more perennial plantings. The *Calocedrus decurrens* (incense cedars) on the north side of the path have some winter damage but seem to be healthy. Staff were working on renovating the turf as we walked by. The grass seed is only germinating now, about a month behind.

In the traditional Maple Bed to the west, Andrew planted *Crocus chrysanthus* (snow crocuses) to add some colour. Because the grass here is so mossy, it does not get cut until the crocuses have disappeared.

Andrew noted that the Garden is phasing out gas-powered equipment and replacing it with electrical for cleaner burning and less noise for visitors.

At the BC Habitat Garden, the new nurse log area at the north is coming along, and Andrew is already shifting plantings around. The *Monarda fistulosa* has proven to be too floppy to be so close to the path, but its height makes it well-suited for the back portion of the planted area of the planted area. The nurse log came from Stanley Park a few years ago when the tree was blown over in a windstorm. The small *Picea sitchensis* (Sitka spruce) is quite stunning right now, with its pale green new shoots. It will grow much bigger, and some day visitors will be able to walk under it. In the other part of this garden across the path, the owl 'sculpture' will stay there permanently. *Ribes sanguineum* 'Pink Tails' is just finishing its bloom and has attracted lots of hummingbirds...and also lots of photographers who have compacted the soil in front of it.

We then turned east at the Western Redcedar and traveled along the north edge of the Great lawn. Sean keeps an eye on the grass here, but Andrew is responsible for the plantings. The lesser celandine invading this area has been difficult to control. Spraying last year didn't do much, so they sprayed again last week. The limber pines (*Pinus flexilis*) on the north side of the path are growing rapidly, and this winter when the cherry picker was in the Garden for Festival of Lights, several limbs were removed. Further east along the path, the large *Hippophae rhamnoides* was removed because of winter storm damage.

The slope west across from the Heather Garden along the path is another project. Andrew has tidied this area up and is planting more ferns and hostas, hoping to create a 'Fern Slope' bed. He only cuts ferns back every couple of years to benefit from the extra coverage for weed suppression left by the dying fronds. Hostas need to be cleaned up every year. As we rounded the corner up to the Cherry Grove, Andrew noted that they are working on a succession planting of new flowering cherries because some of the current cherries are nearing their life span.

In answer to a question about whether the Japanese 'teahouse' structure is finished, he said that it was only meant to suggest a teahouse. He pointed out the small 'door' on the left, which is traditionally the samurai entrance. The door's size forces samurai to enter without their swords, which are traditionally left in a sand pit by the door.

Andrew is very enthusiastic about his work, and we are lucky to have him on the VanDusen gardening staff. He's happy to chat with guides about his work when you see him in the Garden.